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ANNEXATION OF HAWAII.

SPEECH

OF

HON. HENRY M. TELLER,
OF COLORADO,

IN THE

SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES,

JUNE 25, 1898.

WASHINGTON.

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SPEECH
OF
HON. HENRY M. TELLER.

The Senate having under consideration the joint resolution (H. Res. 259) to provide for annexing the Hawaiian Islands to the United States—

Mr. TELLER said:

Mr. PRESIDENT: I am one of those who voted against an adjournment and against an executive session. I did not do so for the purpose of forcing any Senator into unfair debate at a late hour of the night. I had not myself heard that any Senator desired that there should be a postponement for his convenience. I have been one of those who have absented themselves from the Senate a good deal to-day, because I have been executing an order of the Senate; but I have managed to get here, I think, at every roll call.

Mr. President, I do not believe there is a necessity for any great heat over this question. It seems to me that we who are in favor of the admission of the Hawaiian Islands, who expect it will be accomplished during this session of Congress, might as well make up our minds to wait until the debate is exhausted and to give to the other side fair debate. I am prepared to do that, although it is very inconvenient for me to do so. I am prepared to do it, because I believe it is very important that we should act upon the subject at this session, perhaps not so very important that we should act upon it at this immediate hour or within the next two or three weeks.

I said the other day that I was one of those who would not have objected to a postponement to a day fixed and certain upon which a vote could be taken at the next session, if that could have been had, although I can see that some complications might arise by a failure to act upon the subject at this session.

I do not agree with the Senator from Alabama [Mr. MORGAN] that the President of the United States has invaded the Hawaiian Islands. I understand that the Government of that country has not declared neutrality with reference to our affairs with Spain, and by the laws of nations, that being so, we have an unquestioned right to her hospitality if she sees fit to extend it, and no nation in the world can complain of that except Spain. Spain has a right to complain, and it might be made a subject of war on the part of Spain against the Hawaiian Islands. The Government of Hawaii took that chance when they said to us, "Land your sailors and your soldiers on our shores and coal your ships in our harbors." They did that, and a friendly government can extend that hospitality, and the same might have been extended to us by Great Britain if she had seen fit to do so, and it would not have been a cause of complaint by any government in the world except the Government of Spain.

The President has not done anything out of the ordinary. There are plenty of precedents in the history of controversies of this character where such things have been done by friendly nations, even to the extent sometimes of allowing an armed force to pass across the border line and through a portion of the country to assail another state.

I repeat that the only Government which has a right to be heard to complain as to this matter is Spain. France has no right to say anything, and Germany has no right to say anything. They may be offended; they may think it is partiality that ought not to be exhibited; but they are not going to complain. But, suppose they do complain. Suppose France or Germany or Russia should say to the Hawaiian Government: "You must no longer extend to the United States the hospitality that you have heretofore extended, or, if you do, you must reckon with us," and, Mr. President, they would have to reckon then with us, that is, and not with the Government of Hawaii. Common decency on our part would require us to stand in front of and between these islands and any other power in the world, no matter how big it might be. The Government of Hawaii has a right under the law of nations to do what it has done.

Mr. President, I wish we could get to a vote on this question; I wish we could settle it. I wish we could settle it, because I believe it would be for the peace of this country. I do not believe anybody who has spoken against this joint resolution has intended by so doing to delay or to hinder in the slightest possible manner the conduct of this war; nor do I think because Senators do not believe in the acquisition of these islands and exercise a Senatorial right to contend against it that we have any right to say that they are doing it for the purpose of impairing the power of the Government of the United States with relation to this war; and yet, Mr. President, it might do that. It has not done it up to the present time, and I am frank enough to say that I do not believe it will at any time.

I do not believe that that question is going to be a factor in our relations in this controversy with Spain; and yet I should like to have it settled. I should like to have it settled before we come to settle some other great questions which we have got to settle. I am myself of the opinion that the American people are to be brought face to face with questions such as have never been presented to them before.

Mr. President, I am not one of those who lie awake at night or who worry about what will be the conduct of the American people. I have an abiding faith in the good sense of the great masses of my countrymen. I know that their intuitions are correct. I know when you submit to them a question involving the great interests of this nation, they will settle it properly, and they will settle it righteously, too. If it becomes necessary for the American people to change their policy and to do that which we have heretofore declined to do—if, in the interests of the American people or in the interests of humanity, such a policy becomes necessary, they will be found solving that question in the right direction.

I am one of those who do not believe that any evil will ever come to the Republic by the exercise of that great spirit of humanity which induced us to go into this war. I do not believe when you rally the American people in the interests of freedom, you will do anything to debase them. I do not believe that will be possible, though we may take in Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Hawaiian

Islands, and the Philippine Islands. I do not believe you will endanger the solidity or the perpetuity of American institutions, because I believe that we are capable of settling these questions and settling them righteously and properly.

As I said the other evening—and I am going to repeat it—every time we have acquired territory we have had this same controversy, honestly made, I have no doubt. I have before me now the debate which occurred in 1811, when the Territory of New Orleans was admitted as the State of Louisiana. Mr. President, there have not been any such prognostications of evil from our friends who are opposed to this joint resolution as then came from Massachusetts, from Virginia, and from various other States when it was proposed to admit the new State of Louisiana. All the evils that are predicted now were predicted then.

It was said we would not know where to stop; it was said we should continue until we had extended our empire clear to the Pacific; and, Mr. President, thank God they were prophets when they stated that. But it was then stated as a threatened evil, as one of the things which were going to endanger the perpetuity of this Republic of States.

Mr. President, we did extend our territory in spite of Josiah Quincy, who declared, in substance, that it was the right of all States to take themselves out of the Union, and the duty of some to do so if Louisiana should be admitted. It was denied that the United States Government possessed the power either from the Constitution or without it to take in a foot of territory that did not belong to the ancient colonies. They rung the changes on the ancient limits; that you could not go beyond the ancient limits; and that the provision for the admission of States was a provision for the admission of the territory that was ours, and none other.

That is what worried Mr. Jefferson, who was a strict constructionist. He did not doubt our power to bring in the State after we had acquired the territory, but he doubted whether there was power under the Constitution to bring in any more territory at all. Yet he solved that doubt, Mr. President, in favor of bringing it in. We have erected monuments to Jefferson, and Fourth of July orators have been singing his praises ever since, and none too highly; but of all the great things he did for the country and for humanity, he never did anything comparable with that of the acquisition of Louisiana. It was the beginning of the expansion that has put twenty-eight Senators on this floor; it was that which secured to us the advent of the States on the great Pacific sea; it was that which changed us from a third-rate power to a great nation.

Mr. President, when Texas came in there was the same argument that has been heard on the other side within the last few days, of the lack of constitutional power. There was then the cry that it was without constitutional authority or constitutional right.

As I said the other evening—and I want to say it again; it is simply a plain utterance which I think any lawyer ought to agree to—it is the prerogative of nationality, of sovereignty, to have the right to add to its territory. There is not a nation in the world that does not assert it. It could have been taken from us only by positive constitutional prohibition; and if that had been suggested, do you believe the great men of that day would have agreed that we were to be bound by the province of Spain or France on the west and by the province of Great Britain on the north, and that under no circumstances were we to expand our territory?

Oh, no, Mr. President, they would not have put that into the Constitution, and they did not put it in. He who hunts the Constitution over will find no authority for the admission of new territory, for the admission of a new State, outside of that which existed at the time. You get that power in the power of sovereignty; you get that power as you get many other powers which a great nation must exert; you get it because this is a nation and because such a power is essential to its preservation and to its prosperity. Every great power that belongs to every other nation belongs to us.

Do you believe that our fathers, who expected some day we would be great, but perhaps not in a hundred years so great as now, wanted to hedge us in? Josiah Quincy objected to the exercise of that power because it created a disparity between the States. He said the power would be transferred from one section to the other. Others objected for the same reason.

Mr. President, I promised at one time that I would not debate the Hawaiian question, and I shall not. I debated that question in 1894 quite to my satisfaction. These are not new questions to me. I have considered for forty years the question of what is the power of the Government of the United States with reference to these islands and to acquire what may be called foreign lands.

I have been a student of these questions. I came into active life—as a voter, I mean—when these great questions were before the American people and when there were great men in public life—when there were men like Marcy, of New York, of whom I have often spoken here, because he was a citizen of the State of which I was then a citizen, and a member of the political party with which I commenced my political life. He was then contending for the admission of these islands. You have not had a greater constitutional lawyer in the Democratic party since he died. You have not had a purer man. You have not had a man who was more democratic in his sentiments than Mr. Marcy.

I was following his flag. I was a Democrat of the Marcy stripe, and I have been following that flag ever since. I have been believing that it was a mission which we had to take in these islands, because they are needful to us and because of the great development that I believe is to come to us when we have 200,000,000 people on this continent; more than that, when we shall have a population equal to that of China, maintained here, as I believe it can be, in comfort, in happiness, in liberty, and when our trade to the Pacific sea and across it will be the great trade of the world and a great boon to this great population when it shall be overflowing and filling the land with just such people as we have to-day, only, I trust, a little better.

Mr. President, we want those islands. We want them because they are the stopping way across the sea. Senators may talk about Alaska. They may tell us that you have a better coaling station. It is not true. Why do not your ships go there? They go the other way because the God who made the winds and the waves decreed that the ships shall go in the line of water as it rushes and the wind as it blows. That is why they go to Honolulu. Seven out of eight of the great lines that go across the water go there. Every sailing ship that goes out of San Francisco goes there, and it goes there because the wind and the tide decree that it shall.

Mr. President, those islands are necessary to our safety, they are necessary to our commerce, and we can give to those people the blessings of a free government and not injure ourselves. On the

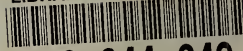
other hand, there lies on our border the richest island of its size, save one, in the world, an island cursed for four hundred years by a government such as few countries have ever had. There ought to be a population there of 20,000,000. Java, no bigger and but little richer, has 20,000,000 under the kindly administration of Holland. On that island, with a government such as we shall give them or a government such as they shall establish and we shall assist them in maintaining, there will be in a few years the most industrious population of the world, where labor will be the best rewarded because of the richness of the soil. It can be made a source of great benefit to us and we can be the agency of great good to them.

Will we let any other power have it? All say not. We have gone to war not to acquire it, but to give those people a government such as they are entitled to and to avoid the annoyance and the damage and the dangers to us that a contest of that kind kept up for years brings on. I do not know what the government will be. I repeat, as I said before, I will leave it to the American people to do justice and right when the time comes, and I do not care what party is in power, whether it be the one which is now in power or another one. The American people will see to it that justice is done the people there and that justice is done to us here.

Mr. President, we will be met in December with another question farther from our doors, more difficult infinitely than these others. The question we are debating is of no consequence perhaps compared with what you will meet then. Will you take from Spain the 2,000 islands that are now Spain's and return them to Spain? I have been studying the history of those islands. There is not much to be learned about them. I found some difficulty in getting at the facts, but I will venture to say that within two hundred years the sun has not shone in any other portion of the world on such a government as was found in those islands—on such wickedness, such oppression, such imbecility and fraud as has been exhibited by the Spanish Government of those islands for two hundred years. Having gone to war to free Cuba with 1,500,000 people, are we going to return to the tender mercies of Spain 8,000,000 men as good in every respect as the people who inhabit the Island of Cuba, and in my judgment a great many of whom are infinitely better?

Mr. President, that is one phase of the question. I will dismiss that by saying that the party which will propose to return those islands will go out of power in the American nation and will remain out for a generation. The American people will never submit to it and no Administration will propose it. No Senator will stand here and advocate it, either, when the time comes. What shall we do with them? Shall we trade them off? Shall we become a peddler, and shall we say to some great power, "Doubting our ability to maintain a good government for these people, doubting their ability to maintain a government for themselves, will you take the islands off our hands and try your hand at it and see how you will get along, and give us something in return?" That would be a spectacle for the gods. It never will happen. No man will disgrace us by proposing it.

If some newspaper writer has suggested it, no statesman will; and if he did, the American people would declare we have not sacrificed our men in Manila for the purpose of returning the islands to Spain or trading them off to anybody else. Where the American soldier dies and is buried and the American flag is put



up, I say there it will stay, and we will grapple with the great problem whether we are capable of managing colonies or not and try it; and if we fail, it will be the first time that the Anglo-Saxon race has failed when these great problems have been presented. It will be the first time that the American people have failed when great questions were presented to them to solve them properly and righteously and in the interest of their own people and the world.

Mr. President, let us meet it. Let us say to the world, let us say to everybody, "We are going to do the right thing when the right time comes." If these people are fit for local government, and can stand alone according to the principles that we have proclaimed, it will be our duty to see that they do. If they can not, it will be our duty to see that they have such a system and such education as will put them in line where ultimately they can enjoy the blessings of a free flag.

Mr. President, you hear mutterings of Germany, of Japan, of Russia, and of France. They tell us that Germany has a squadron there, and they do not know what it means. I saw the other day that Prince Henry said to Dewey something that indicated that he might want to have a hand in the protection of German interests in Manila, and Admiral Dewey, who understood the laws of war, knew we were there in control, and that nobody else had a right except with our consent to land marines, said: "Prince, I hope you will not get your ships between my guns and the enemy;" and he will not.

Let us give the world to understand that we did not seek this war: that we did not go into it for conquest; that we went in to it for the purpose of enlarging the area of human freedom, and that we can enlarge it at home and abroad; that if our duty required us to do it in Cuba, it requires us to do it in the Philippine Islands, and that we will settle this question for ourselves. We will say to Spain when she gets out, "Everything you or your people have got here shall be kindly cared for." We will say to Germany, "Your people shall have our protection, but you keep your hands off. We will not tolerate your interference, because we are capable of taking care of your people as well as you are yourselves."

I would say to the world, when this war is over, "We will settle with Spain. We want no interference. We want no concert of powers;" and if I was President, I would not allow any concert of powers to address me on the subject of peace. I would say to them, "The American nation is big enough to conduct this war to a successful issue. She is generous enough and good enough when it is through to make an honorable and proper peace with the enemy that she has subdued." Our honor and reputation among the nations of the world are at stake.

With the greatest population, save one, of any country that may be called harmonious or homogeneous—in fact, I think I may say the only homogeneous population of 75,000,000—with a wealth that no other nation possesses, with a history for fairness and good treatment of friend and foe equal to that of any other nation in the world, we can say to the world, "Let us solve this problem unaided and unassisted, and we will do it in accordance with right and in accordance with justice, keeping in mind at all times not only the interest of the American people, but every one of the people whom we invite or bring under the influence of our flag."

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